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PROGRAMME, THE ENVIRONMENT FUND AND ADMINISTRATIVE
AND OTHER BUDGETARY MATTERS

Status report on implementation of the Global Programme of Action
for the Protection of the Marine Environment from
Land-based Activities

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report, prepared in pursuance of Governing Council decisions 19/14 A, B and C, discusses UNEP's progress to date, as secretariat of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, in support of implementation of the Global Programme of Action. It comprises information on (a) establishment of the Global Programme of Action Coordination Office, (b) regional implementation of the Global Programme of Action, (c) inter-agency and international cooperation, (d) the clearing-house mechanism and (e) Global Programme of Action-related assessments.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

Endorse the General Assembly's recommendation in resolution 51/189 that Governments intensify their efforts, within the context of their representation in governing bodies of other agencies and organizations within the United Nations system, to ensure that those agencies and organizations have the mandate and the needed financial and human resources to undertake their responsibilities as lead agencies to coordinate the development of the Global Programme of Action clearing-house mechanism for specific pollutant source categories, as defined in the General Assembly resolution;

* UNEP/GC.20/1.

Request the Executive Director, in cooperation with Governments and United Nations and other relevant organizations, to explore the feasibility of UNEP convening a global conference by the year 2000, to address sewage as a major land-based source of pollution affecting human and ecosystem health;

I. BACKGROUND

1. Governments adopted the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), 1/ and the Washington Declaration, 2/ in November 1995. They also designated UNEP as the secretariat for the Global Programme of Action, requesting that it (a) promote and facilitate implementation of the Global Programme of Action at the national level and at the regional, including subregional, level through, in particular, a revitalization of the regional seas programme; and (b) play a catalytic role with other organizations and institutions in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action at the international level.
2. UNEP's Governing Council subsequently adopted decisions 19/14 A, B and C on implementation of the Global Programme of Action, in which, inter alia, it (a) endorsed the proposed role of UNEP as the secretariat of the Global Programme of Action; (b) accorded priority to implementation of the Global Programme of Action in UNEP's programme of work; (c) requested the Executive Director to incorporate Global Programme of Action activities in all regional seas programmes and to establish links with other regional plans, programmes or conventions for protection of the marine and freshwater environments; and (d) requested the Executive Director to continue strengthening UNEP's integrated management related to the freshwater and marine environment for implementation of the Global Programme of Action.
3. The present document summarizes UNEP's actions to date in its role as the secretariat of the Global Programme of Action, emphasizing those actions accomplished since the nineteenth session of the Council.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION COORDINATION OFFICE (COUNCIL DECISIONS 19/14 A AND B)

4. UNEP accepted the offer of the Government of the Netherlands to host the Global Programme of Action Coordination Office in The Hague. It was officially opened on 24 November 1997, becoming operational in January 1998. The initial personnel comprised three Professional officers (including two seconded by the Dutch Government) and one General Service staff member. As noted in the Executive Director's report on the institutional aspects of implementation of the Global Programme of Action (UNEP/GC.19/INF.4, para. 28), the eventual total will comprise six Professional and four General Service staff members.
5. The Coordination Office prepared a draft "strategy paper", identifying proposed actions, and presented it at three informal consultations in 1998: with Governments (13 and 14 May), with UNEP and non-UNEP regional seas

1/ UNEP(OCA)/LBA/IG.2/7.

2/ UNEP(OCA)/LBA/IG.2/6, annex II.

programmes (24-26 June), and with non-governmental organizations (23 and 24 November). The paper was also discussed at an ad hoc meeting of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas (22-24 June).

III. REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION
(COUNCIL DECISIONS 19/14 A AND B)

6. In the Washington Declaration, Governments expressed their commitment to protect and preserve the marine environment from the impacts of land-based activities, and their intention to cooperate on a regional basis to coordinate efforts for maximum efficiency and to facilitate action at the national level.

7. A series of regional technical workshops have been convened during 1996-1998 in the framework of the UNEP regional seas programme as a means of strengthening national capabilities for protection of the aquatic environment from land-based activities, and to promote regional and subregional cooperation. Among the aims were (a) to finalize regional overviews of land-based activities, (b) to agree on development of the regional components of the clearing-house mechanism and (c) to reach agreement on regional programmes of action to address the impacts of land-based activities on the aquatic environment.

8. The workshop participants included government-designated experts and representatives of United Nations agencies, international financing institutions, regional development banks, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. A list of these workshops, and the priority pollutants/sources identified at each workshop, is given below.

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Region	Priority pollutants/sources identified, in order of priority
<u>South-East Pacific a/</u> (Lima, 18-21 November 1996) (5 States) Follow-up regional workshop (Viña del Mar, Chile, 19-22 October 1998)	Sewage Oils (hydrocarbons) Heavy metals Persistent organic pollutants (POPs)
<u>ROPME Sea Area/Red Sea and Gulf of Aden</u> (Bahrain, 2-5 December 1996) (14 States) Follow-up ROPME Sea Area workshop (Kuwait, 8 and 9 June 1997)	(a) <u>Red Sea and Gulf of Aden:</u> Physical alteration and destruction of habitats Sewage Nutrients and sediment mobilization (b) <u>ROPME Sea Area:</u> Oils (hydrocarbons) and combustion products Physical alteration, sediment mobilization and destruction of habitats Sewage and nutrients Litter Atmospheric deposition Persistent organic pollutants Heavy metals Radioactive substances
<u>East Asian Seas</u> (Bangkok, 30 April-3 May 1997) (10 States)	Sewage Agriculture Industry Urban run-off Habitat modification
<u>Eastern Africa</u> (Zanzibar, 6-9 October 1997) (9 States)	Domestic sewage Solid domestic waste Habitat degradation Agrochemical pollution Industrial waste pollution
<u>South Asian Seas</u> (Colombo, 22-25 October 1997) (5 States)	Sewage Litter
<u>West and Central Africa</u> (Abidjan, 25-28 November 1997) (21 States)	Sewage Physical alteration and habitat degradation Urban and domestic run-off Agriculture Industry Litter Oil (hydrocarbons) Sediment mobilization Heavy metals
<u>Upper South-West Atlantic a/</u> (Brasilia, 30 September-2 October 1998) (3 States)	Domestic sewage Industrial sewage Physical alteration and habitat degradation Oils (hydrocarbons)

a/ See Council decision 19/14 B.

9. Regional workshops are planned in 1999 for the North-West Pacific and the South Pacific. It will be noted that sewage has been identified by Governments in all the regional workshops to date as the major land-based source of pollution affecting human and ecosystem health.

IV. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION IN IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION (COUNCIL DECISIONS 19/14 A, B AND C)

10. Effective inter-agency and international cooperation is fundamental for successful, cost-effective implementation of the Global Programme of Action. It is also fundamental for enhancing capacity-building, technology transfer and cooperation, and financial support. Effective implementation of the Global Programme of Action also requires support from appropriate international agencies and organizations.

11. To this end, the Governing Council invited the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas to perform the functions of an inter-agency steering committee for the Global Programme of Action, in collaboration with the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, and in cooperation with other relevant agencies and bodies.

12. At an informal meeting held in Stockholm from 6 to 8 August 1997, the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas agreed, *inter alia*, that no new group should be convened to perform the functions of a steering committee for the Global Programme of Action to review implementation of the Global Programme of Action. At a subsequent joint informal meeting held in Stockholm on 12 and 13 August 1997, the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas and the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources acknowledged the need for a common format and method for reporting on implementation of the Global Programme of Action, for use by both ACC Subcommittees, as well as the need for agencies to review the relevant annexes of the implementation plan for the Global Programme of Action to determine any needed refinement. They also agreed to discuss how non-governmental organizations could support implementation of the Global Programme of Action, to determine the tasks to be undertaken by specific agencies in facilitating support of the Global Programme of Action, and to call for examination by all agencies of their possible responsibilities in supporting implementation of the Global Programme of Action, and of the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) project as a supportive activity.

13. The ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas met again in Lisbon from 20 to 23 January 1998 and agreed that the main role of the Steering Committee for the Global Programme of Action is to facilitate the provision of necessary inputs to the intergovernmental meetings to review the Global Programme of Action. For this purpose, the Steering Committee could periodically review:

(a) The status of implementation of the Global Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels;

(b) The experience gained, problems encountered and assistance required for implementation of the Global Programme of Action;

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(c) The plans for forthcoming periods (annual, biannual, medium-term, long-term);

(d) The roles and responsibilities of individual partner agencies (including those comprising the Steering Committee) in supporting the implementation of the Global Programme of Action, with specific reference to:

(i) The status of implementation of regional programmes of action to deal with impacts of land-based activities on the marine environment;

(ii) The status and updating of each source-category component of the data directory for the Global Programme of Action clearing-house, as envisaged in paragraphs 43-45 of the Global Programme of Action;

(e) Ways and means of facilitating effective support for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action through strengthened cooperation between UNEP and its partner agencies;

(f) The modalities for governmental participation in the process.

14. Working with and through the expert groups for each pollutant source category, the Global Programme of Action Steering Committee will also coordinate the basic design and structure of the clearing-house data directory, and its linkages to information delivery mechanisms. The Committee will also be responsible for establishing a common format for individual source-category components and for cross-referencing among components.

15. It is noted, however, that although the various tasks and responsibilities have generally received agreement from the agencies comprising the Global Programme of Action Steering Committee, the modalities and operational details of carrying out these tasks and responsibilities have not yet been finalized.

16. An ad hoc meeting of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas (The Hague, 22 and 23 June 1998) suggested that the first intergovernmental review of the implementation of the Global Programme of Action could take place in 2000 or 2002. It was suggested that an ad hoc intergovernmental review in 1999 (possibly in conjunction with the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development) would also be very useful.

V. GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION CLEARING-HOUSE (COUNCIL DECISIONS 19/14 A AND C)

17. The Global Programme of Action recommended the establishment of a clearing-house, as a priority for mobilizing experience and expertise, including facilitation of effective scientific, technical and financial cooperation, and capacity-building.

18. At the global level, the clearing-house is being structured around organizations responsible for pollutant source categories, as specified in the Global Programme of Action and further elaborated in United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/189 on institutional arrangements for the

Global Programme of Action. At the global level, the clearing-house will ensure access to the body of international scientific and technical information and experience. A major regional clearing-house component is also necessary to facilitate user access and to adapt information to local circumstances. The regional seas programmes and commissions responsible for regional sea areas also provide a regional institutional framework for clearing-house activities.

19. To this end, General Assembly resolution 51/189 calls upon States to take action in the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations and programmes to ensure they take the lead in coordinating the development of the clearing-house mechanism with respect to the following pollutant source categories (not listed in order of priority): 3/

- (a) Sewage - the World Health Organization;
- (b) Persistent organic pollutants - the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, the International Programme on Chemical Safety and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety;
- (c) Heavy metals - the United Nations Environment Programme, in cooperation with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals;
- (d) Radioactive substances - the International Atomic Energy Agency;
- (e) Nutrients and sediment mobilization - the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;
- (f) Oils (hydrocarbons) and litter - the International Maritime Organization;
- (g) Physical alterations, including habitat modification and destruction of areas of concern - the United Nations Environment Programme.

20. UNEP assisted WHO, IOC and IMO in preparing papers outlining their proposed activities in respect of each pollutant source category. As requested by the Governing Council, UNEP's Executive Director also requested other agency heads to give priority to the implementation of the Global Programme of Action within their work programmes. Several agencies have already pledged their commitment. Three agencies (WHO, IAEA and IOC) have adopted resolutions in support of the Global Programme of Action. Further, WHO drafted a report on development of a sewage information clearing-house.

3/ The agency participation in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action, and the General Assembly resolution as a whole, were subsequently endorsed by the member States of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). IOC has expressed its interest in cooperating with the agencies designated to take the lead in dealing with the clearing-house source categories for oils (hydrocarbons) and litter (IMO) and nutrients and sediment mobilization (FAO).

Both WHO and IMO, however, indicated their inability to undertake the lead coordination role for their respective pollutant source categories without additional financial resources. The next occasion at which the matter can be discussed by the FAO Council is at its November 1998 session.

21. As noted above, agencies are in various stages of taking up their lead agency roles in the pollutant source categories. A continuing constraint for most agencies, however, is the fact that the clearing-house goals of the Global Programme of Action, including lead agency responsibilities, have not necessarily been included in their agency work programmes. As a result, sufficient financial and human resources to undertake their lead agency roles have not been forthcoming in many cases. Consequently, a major contribution of Governments, within the context of their representation on the governing bodies of the lead agencies, would be to ensure the agencies have the clear mandate and the needed financial and human resources to undertake their lead agency responsibilities in a timely and efficient manner.

VI. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF OCEANS AND COASTAL WATERS (COUNCIL DECISIONS 19/14 A AND C)

22. The Global Programme of Action identified a need for regular reviews of the state of the world marine environment at the global level, and recommended the establishment of linkages with international programmes monitoring and assessing the state of the marine environment and relevant river systems. The Global Programme of Action specifically identified the IMO/FAO/IOC/WMO/WHO/IAEA/United Nations/UNEP Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) as a mechanism for developing scientific assessments of the impacts of land-based pollution on the marine environment.

22. On the basis of a UNEP proposal presented at its twenty-sixth session, held in Paris from 25 to 29 March 1996, GESAMP established a Working Group on Marine Environmental Assessments, designating UNEP as the lead agency. UNEP subsequently convened the first meeting of the Working Group in Geneva on 17 and 18 May 1996. At its twenty-seventh session (Nairobi, 14-18 April 1997), GESAMP considered plans for undertaking an assessment of the state of the marine environment by the year 2002, and an assessment of land-based activities by the year 1999.

23. The regional overviews of land-based activities affecting the aquatic environment, prepared in the framework of Global Programme of Action regional workshops within UNEP's regional seas programme, constitute basic material for the GESAMP global assessment of land-based activities. Preparation of this global assessment is under way, through meetings of the Working Group on Marine Environmental Assessments and its Editorial Board, to consider, review and improve the draft biennial reports on the state of the marine environment and the global report on land-based activities.

24. GESAMP also agreed to establish cooperative mechanisms with the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) project in areas of mutual interest within both assessment exercises.
